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Governor

Bobby Cagle, MSW
Commissioner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**DECAL partnering with Georgia Public Library Service and
Atlanta Speech School for Language & Literacy Partnership**

***“Read and Talk” Conferences will teach strategies to support language development
in the infant and toddler classroom***

ATLANTA, Ga., (October 9, 2012) – Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning’s (DECAL) Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care supports infants and toddlers by providing Georgia’s early care and education professionals with multi-faceted and culturally responsive resources that support children’s physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and language development.

Starting this month, technical assistance specialists from the Georgia Program for Infant and Toddler Care in partnership with Georgia Public Library Service and the Rollins Center for Language & Learning will be hosting statewide “Read & Talk” conferences for early childhood educators and parents. The conferences will reinforce the understanding that relationships between teachers and young children coupled with intentional teaching practices are at the heart of language development.

The conferences are scheduled for **Saturday, October 20, 2012**, at the Lee County Public Library in Leesburg, 8:30 AM to 12:30 PM; **Saturday, December 8, 2012**, at the Southwest Chatham County Library in Savannah, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM; **Saturday, February 9, 2013**, at the Hall County/Spout Springs Public Library in Flowery Branch, 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM; **Saturday, March 2, 2013**, at the Columbus Public Library, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM; and **Saturday, May 11, 2013**, at the Athens-Clarke County Public Library, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM.

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The first three years constitute the most significant developmental period of a child's life. Early care and education lay the foundation for a child's success in school. A rich and stimulating language environment is critical to early language development.

DECAL Commissioner Bobby Cagle said, "Our youngest learners have the right to be exposed to language all day long. Parents and teachers have a unique opportunity to introduce vocabulary, pull out and extend language and to help our children become keenly interested in books, sounds, and words."

"Families and teachers rely on the books, story time activities, summer reading programs, and other resources offered by local libraries. Partnering with Georgia Public Library Services to offer the Language and Literacy conferences in local libraries simply makes sense," said Carol Hartman, assistant commissioner of DECAL.

"The Rollins Center for Language & Learning of the Atlanta Speech School is so proud to be working in partnership with DECAL and Georgia Public Library Services," said Comer Yates, executive director for the Atlanta Speech School. "The research makes it clear that it is essential for our youngest learners to be exposed to ongoing vocabulary and conversation in their homes and classrooms. We are excited about supporting parents and teachers in their efforts to give Georgia's children the strongest possible start."

To pre-register for the conference, please call 770.359.5224 or e-mail: gapitc@decals.ga.gov

About Georgia Public Library Service

Georgia Public Library Service is the state agency that administers services and programs that empower libraries to improve the lives of citizens across the state. Included are the PINES public library automation and lending network; the statewide GLASS network of talking book centers that provide library services for the blind and other qualified individuals; professional consulting, training and facilities support; the annual Summer Reading Program; and computer networking and technical support for more than 400 facilities.

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About Rollins Center for Language & Learning

The Rollins Center for Language & Learning, a division of the Atlanta Speech School, is a professional development program that provides teachers with research-based strategies to foster the language and literacy skills of young children. The Rollins Center trains and coaches teachers of children from infancy through third grade, helping to improve student achievement and teacher performance as we support the goal of GEEARS, that all Georgia's students will enter kindergarten prepared to succeed and on a path to "read to learn" by third grade. Rollins places a priority on impacting improved outcomes for students with from low socio-economic circumstances, helping to improve the quality of early education for our youngest most vulnerable citizens.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.decal.ga.gov.